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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
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CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

1. Syria
2. Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Most media featured the intelligence briefings yesterday to Congress on the alleged Syria - North Korea nuclear connection. The media

quoted senior Bush administration members as saying that Israel destroyed a nuclear reactor during its September 6, 2007 strike on Syria and that the reactor was close to being operational. Israel Radio quoted a senior U.S. official as saying that the U.S. was never asked for nor gave a green light to the Israeli raid. Yediot and Maariv illustrated the story with pictures allegedly taken inside and outside the reactor, which was said to be modeled on a North Korean design. (Maariv claims that the pictures were taken by "an Israeli spy.") Israel Radio reported that Israeli cabinet ministers have been instructed not to respond to the story. Ha'aretz quoted senior Israeli defense sources as saying that it was still too early to gauge how Damascus will react, but that they warned that the Syrians may now be forced to retaliate in some way. Channel 2-TV reported that PM Ehud Olmert obtained Defense Minister Ehud Barak's approval to share the reactor pictures with the Americans. However, Maariv cited a claim by Barak's office that he was absolutely opposed to passing on the documents.

Leading media reported that yesterday a delegation from Hamas that included Mahmoud Zahar and Said Siam told Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman that Hamas is prepared to accept a temporary cease-fire with Israel. The cease-fire would first be limited to Gaza and then be expanded at a yet to be determined date to the West Bank. Hamas had previously demanded that a truce apply simultaneously to both areas, but Israel refused. According to Hamas's understanding, Israel will immediately cease all military activity in Gaza, including arrests, assassinations and field operations. In return, Hamas will ensure an end to cross-border rocket fire and stop arms smuggling. Additionally, the Rafah crossing will be opened to ease cargo shipments into and out of the Strip. The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli defense officials as saying that it was likely that Defense Minister Barak would agree to the cease-fire, since he opposes a large-scale military operation in Gaza, currently Israel's only viable course of action. The Jerusalem Post quoted Hamas officials in Gaza as saying that Hamas is keen on ending the case of Gilad Shalit soon, "to create a better atmosphere" that would consolidate the cease-fire. Ha'aretz reported that Israel will now monitor Hamas's compliance with its commitments to Egypt: If Hamas manages to keep things calm and rein in terrorist activity by the other Palestinian factions, the IDF will be instructed to refrain from taking offensive action in the Gaza Strip. Ha'aretz wrote that while no such order was given yesterday, apparently as of today there is a new, more cautious procedure in place for authorizing military operations.

Leading media quoted Syrian President Bashar Assad as saying in the interview published yesterday in the Qatari newspaper Al-Watan that he did not expect direct talks with Israel to be resumed in the coming year. "Perhaps we will be able to talk about direct negotiations with the next American administration," he was quoted as saying. Israel would not comment on the withdrawal offer, but did say it was interested in negotiating with Damascus. Maariv reported that Syrian FM Walid Muallem told a Western figure whom Syria hosted that "Syria has no claim to the water resources in the Golan, and Israel will be able to access all of them." Ha'aretz quoted Mark Regev, a spokesman for Olmert, as saying "We are interested in peace with Syria. We know what the Syrians expect from negotiations and the Syrians know what Israel wants from them." Maariv quoted President Shimon Peres as saying in a private conversation: "We will not hand over the Golan to Syria. Assad prefers Lebanon and the connection with Hizbullah. Unless Syria disengages from Iran and Hizbullah, Israel must not give it the Golan." Makor Rishon-Hatzofe bannered the Golan settlers' opposition to giving up their homes,

Israel Radio reported that two Israeli security guards were shot and killed in a terrorist attack in the Israeli industrial zone of Nitzanei Shalom near Tulkarm. The radio cited Islamic Jihad's claim of responsibility.

Israel Radio quoted Danny Gillerman, Israel's Ambassador to the UN, as saying that former U.S. President Jimmy Carter's hands are "tainted with blood" because he met and shook hands with Hamas leader Khaled Mashal. Gillerman also voiced his indignation at Libyan Ambassador to the UN Giadalla Ettalhi's stating at the Security Council that the situation in Gaza is worse than that of the Nazi concentration camps. The radio and other media reported that Gillerman and other Israeli spokesmen claim that Hamas is

refusing to pump a large amount of fuel that is in storage tanks on the Palestinian side of the border in order to create a fabricated crisis and blame it on Israel.

Ha'aretz reported that yesterday PA President Mahmoud Abbas asked President George Bush to tighten oversight over Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank. Abbas told his host in Washington that the continued construction in the settlements would make it difficult for him to convince the Palestinian people that his peace talks with Israel may reach a breakthrough. Abbas also told the President about the good atmosphere in his talks with PM Olmert. But he said progress was slow and that there were still many issues on which there was no agreement. The Jerusalem Post and Israel Radio cited Bush's optimism regarding the achievement of an Israeli-Palestinian accord before he leaves office..

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that the release of Jonathan Pollard is not expected to be discussed during President Bush's visit to Israel.

All media reported that an engineering problem has delayed the launching of the Amos 3 communications satellite from Baikonur, Kazakhstan, which was scheduled for yesterday, until Monday.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel will sign a declaration of trade and economic cooperation together with Rwanda, Burundi, Benin, and Liberia next Wednesday to develop new export markets and to help the African countries build infrastructure and technology.

Maariv reported that billionaire businessman/politician Arkady Gaidamak has sold his English-language newspaper The Moscow News to the Russian government. Maariv quoted senior sources in Russia as saying that he is reimbursing part of a \$365-million debt to Russia, which was part in a deal with Angola.

Ha'aretz reported that Ivanka Trump, the daughter of real estate mogul Donald Trump, will arrive in Israel on May 12 to gather information on investments for her father and try to interest Israelis in his new real estate project in Philadelphia.

1. Syria:

Summary:

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The dismal figure in [the Syrian nuclear reactor] affair is Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.... Yesterday's revelations presented her as a sucker -- worse: as someone betraying her position."

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The silence in Jerusalem made moderation in Damascus easier. These regional behavioral codes are now disrupted by the Americans in a way that may push Assad toward defending Syrian honor."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "If he wants Israelis to risk all by ceding the Golan, Assad is going to have to show that he truly wants a change -- and he is going to have to take some chances too."

Liberal columnist Ofer Shelach wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "The Syrian demand for public negotiations, which might only be a pretext for rejection -- who knows -- is something that the Prime Minister should seriously consider."

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized: "It looks as if America is running around with two souls at least: The litmus test between the two is the attitude toward Israel."

Block Quotes:

II. "Second Roles"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (4/25): "In this play Israel finds itself playing a role it is not accustomed to: a lesser one. This story isn't about Israel. It touches the roots of U.S. foreign policy and a domestic political struggle, in which Israel has nothing to gain. Israel's priorities in this affair are Syria first, and then North Korea. America's priorities are first of all North Korea and -- far behind -- Syria.... The dismal figure in this affair is Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The accord with North Korea is her only tangible achievement in her over three years at the State Department. She is adhering to the agreement even as senior administration officials have understood that the Koreans have breached it. Yesterday's revelations presented her as a sucker -- worse: as someone betraying her position. If she doesn't get an Israeli-Arab agreement in her remaining seven months, she will leave the administration empty-handed -- like her predecessor Madeleine Albright."

II. "Those Who Need to Know"

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (4/25): "The moment it is officially known that Israel destroyed a reactor in Syria and Damascus failed to respond, Assad's standing becomes weaker domestically and in the Arab world. In Israel, the assumption has been that time eases the pain, but will not cure it. The silence in Jerusalem made moderation in Damascus easier. These regional behavioral codes are now disrupted by the Americans in a way that may push Assad toward defending Syrian honor. The release of information on the site comes at a bad time for Assad.... Amid this complexity, Jerusalem and Damascus have tried their best to bolster each other this week with declarations on their willingness to renew negotiations on the Golan Heights, an effort geared to cool the atmosphere before the revelations in Washington. In talks with reporters, senior officials in Israel complimented Assad's 'seriousness and maturity' and described him as a worthy successor to his father."

III. "A Golan Peace"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (4/25): "Since [the Yom Kippur War], the Syrians have remained a force for instability in the region.... Whatever his motivations, Israel should judge Assad by what he says and what he does. Assad insists that even under a peace treaty normalization is out of the question.... It is in Israel's long-term interest to have a peace treaty with Syria, but not at any price, Israel would have to make irrevocable strategic concessions. So it's hard to imagine many Israelis having the confidence to support a deal that does not signify a true opening of genuine peaceful relations. If Assad wants a treaty, we urge him to come to Jerusalem or invite Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to Damascus. After 60 years of unremitting anti-Israel and anti-Semitic incitement Syrians may indeed not be ready for normalization. But if he wants Israelis to risk all by ceding the Golan, Assad is going to have to show that he truly wants a change -- and he is going to have to take some chances too."

IV. "This Is Not Yet the Time to Talk about It"

Liberal columnist Ofer Shelach wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (4/25): "This is how the Israeli leadership looks under Ehud Olmert, the prime minister whose most common response is: 'I can't/don't want/I don't believe the time has come to talk about this.' Those who are trying to find out what's happening between Israel and Syria must rely on tidbits and statements from those people close enough to have maybe or maybe not heard something from Olmert or to interpret by themselves the silences and hints of the Sphinx in Jerusalem.... Ehud Barak can tell him firsthand: In a democratic state, the preparation of hearts for an agreement is no less important than any list of security demands it contains. It won't be easy for Olmert to sell the Israelis overnight a virgin agreement from an unpopular prime minister. The Syrian demand for public negotiations, which might only be a pretext for rejection -- who knows -- is something that the Prime Minister should seriously consider."

IV. "The United States Has Two Souls"

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized (4/25): "This was one of the most complex weeks in Israel-U.S. relations. The arrest of an elderly Jew dubbed 'Pollard No. 2' whose transgressions allegedly took place in America close to 30 years ago; the CIA has acknowledged that the target that was struck in Syria on September 6, 2007 -- by Israel, according to foreign media report -- was a Syrian-North Korean nuclear reactor; the U.S. press also reported that contrary to restrictions inherent in President Bush's peace initiative, there is a secret Israel-U.S. agreement allowing development and expansion of existing Judea and Samaria [i.e. West Bank] settlements that Israel views as being within its future borders.... The various events in Israel-U.S. relations that occurred this week point first of all to a war of institutions within the U.S. administration and the American elites.... It looks as if America is running around with two souls at least: The litmus test between the two is the attitude toward Israel."

12. Mideast:

Summary:

Columnist and former Meretz Party Chairman Yossi Sarid wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "All good reasons for apartheid are bad reasons; apartheid always has a reason, and it never has a

justification."

Block Quotes:

"Yes, It Is Apartheid"

Columnist and former Meretz Party Chairman Yossi Sarid wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (4/25): "Let's let old Carter be, so he may let sleeping warriors lie; he will not be back. The contents of his words, however, should not be ignored. 'Apartheid,' he said, 'apartheid' -- a dark, scary word coined by Afrikaners and meaning segregation, racial segregation. What does he want from us, that evil man: What do we have to do with apartheid? Does a separation fence constitute separation? Do separate roads for Jewish settlers and Palestinians really separate? Are Palestinian enclaves between Jewish settlements Bantustans? There is no hint of similarity between South Africa and Israel, and only a sick mind could draw such shadowy connections between them. Roadblocks and inspections at every turn; licenses and permits for every little matter; the arbitrary seizure of land; special privileges in water use; cheap, hard labor; forming and uniting families by bureaucratic whim -- none of these are apartheid, in any way. They are an incontrovertible security necessity, period. The white Afrikaners, too, had reasons for their segregation policy; they, too, felt threatened -- a great evil was at their door, and they were frightened, out to defend themselves. Unfortunately, however, all good reasons for apartheid are bad reasons; apartheid always has a reason, and it never has a justification."

JONES